AUTHORITY AND TRADITION IN ANCIENT HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Introduction

I. THE SCOPE AND SUBJECT OF THE BOOK

This book is a study of the explicit attempts by which the ancient Greek and Roman historians claim the authority to narrate the deeds encompassed in their works. The term 'authority' has many meanings over a range of disciplines, but in this book it is used to refer to literary authority, the rhetorical means by which the ancient historian claims the competence to narrate and explain the past, and simultaneously constructs a persona that the audience will find persuasive and believable.[1] The work is thus a study of certain forms and conventions of persuasion employed by the historians. No attempt is made to evaluate the truth or falsity of historians' claims; rather, I try to set out the various claims which are part of the construction of the author's historiographical persona; to see how and why these claims are made; to explain how the tradition of such claims developed; and to show how the tradition moulded the way in which writers claimed historiographical authority.

The writers treated range from Herodotus in the fifth century BC to Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth century AD. Included in this study are both the surviving (either whole or in part) historians and those whose works have come down to us only in fragments.[2] By the standard classification, the historical writing of the Greeks and Romans is usually divided into five types or genres: (i) mythography or genealogy, concerned mostly with establishing lines of descent, and oftentimes going

[1] Except for brief treatment at Ch. II §2, I do not discuss authority in the sense of an established political, religious, or social power, something external to the history itself, which impinges, either beneficially or harmfully, upon the literary work; for the ancient historian's relation to power see Meissner, *Historiker zwischen Polis und Koenigshof, passim*. For an overview of the various meanings and forms of 'authority' see Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power* 37–45.

[2] When using fragmentary historians I have tried to apply the cautions suggested by Brunt, *CQ* 30 (1980) 477–94.

back to the mythical period; (ii) ethnography, the study of a people's customs and way of life; (iii) chronography, attempts to establish timetables of events, sometimes even written in a tabular form; (iv) history, the narrative of deeds, whether it be a contemporary history, a work that mixes contemporary and non-contemporary history, an historical monograph, a memoir, or a universal history; and (v) horography, or local history, told from the point of view of a single city-state and sometimes in a bare annalistic form.[3] In this work I treat all those who wrote narrative or largely narrative histories, so that my material comes mainly from section (iv) above. Material from geographers, biographers, epitomators, and writers of chronicles is occasionally adduced as evidence, but no systematic study of these genres has been made.[4] Works of ancient literary criticism, when they have a bearing on the writing of history, have also been used, but I have not made a special study of them. Lucian's second-century AD work, *How to Write History*, is, of course, included throughout, although I have avoided the tendency, sometimes seen, to begin with Lucian and then seek confirmation in the historians before and after him. My own procedure has been to include him either at the end of a section after the historians themselves have been examined, or in his proper chronological place.[5]

I have not chosen certain historians as representatives or spokesmen for ancient historiography as a whole. It has long been common to separate historians into two camps, and to posit, on the one hand, an events-oriented, largely political history that counts as its practitioners Thucydides, Polybius, Tacitus, and Ammianus, to name a few; and on the other hand, a pleasure-oriented, highly artificial 'rhetorical'

[3] The fundamental exposition of the development of historiographical genres is Jacoby, *Abhandlungen* 16–64; followed in large measure but with modifications by Fornara, *Nature* 1–46. Both arrangements are somewhat constrictive and leave too little room for innovation; some works (Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Velleius' history, Tacitus' *Agricola*) are problematic and do not fit well into any of the categories. See also the survey of the development of Greek historiography by Hornblower in id., ed., *Greek Historiography* 7–54.

[4] I do include Agatharchides of Cnidus' *On the Red Sea*, because Verdin, in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World* 407–20, and Burstein, *Agatharchides* 21–4 argue convincingly that it is a history, not a geography.

[5] The tract was written in AD 166: Jones, *Culture and Society* 59–60. There are several studies of Lucian's work, the most useful being Avenarius, *LS* and Homeyer, *Lukian*; for bibliography see Georgiadou and Larmour, *ANRW* II. 34. 2, 1448–78. I treat the historians satirised by Lucian as actual historians, although this is contested: see Jones, ibid. 63–4, 161–6.

historiography, whose founder or patron saint was Isocrates and whose members include Ephorus, Duris, Dionysius, Livy and many others. In my opinion, such a schematic approach, quite apart from the rather useless designation as 'rhetorical', belies the number of approaches to history in antiquity and the various reasons why both good and bad writers turned to the past. Since there was great variety in the writing of narrative history, I have tried to represent that variety in this work, believing that only with a consideration of all types of Greek and Roman historical writing will we be able to come to a better understanding of the nature of ancient historiography.[6]

2. AUTHORITY

When we look at our earliest examples of Greek literature, the narrators of Homer's epics, we see that the poet's claims of authority, which are neither explicit nor lengthy, rest on his invocation of the Muse. She is portrayed as the inspiration of the poet, who supplies that which the mortal poet cannot, and who (in some sense) guarantees the truth or reliability (however this is to be interpreted) of the account that follows.[7] Having made the opening invocation, the poet will only occasionally thereafter break the mimetic pane of the narrative.[8] It has been suggested that the poet of the *Odyssey* shows a greater self-awareness of his poetic authority, moving away from dependence on the Muse, and expressing pride in his own ability.[9] Such a view has much to recommend it; one sees in the *Odyssey* both the Muse's inspiration and an acknowledgement of the poet's technique or craft, as, for example, when the bard Phemius says that he is both self-taught and inspired by

[6] For various views on the nature of ancient historiography, see Wiseman, *CC*; Fornara, *Nature*; Woodman, *RICH*; Meister, *Griechische Geschichtsschreibung*.

[7] I have here simplified greatly, since the exact nature of poetic inspiration and its importance for and relation to the truth-claims of the poet are much discussed topics that have been interpreted quite differently: see Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* 1.51, 167; Heubeck *et al.*, *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1.68 and references there; P. Murray, *JHS* 101 (1981) 87–100; Slings, *LF* 112 (1989) 72–80; Bowie, *L&F* 8–20.

[8] According to de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers* 46, Homer refers to his activity as narrator six times in the *Iliad* (1.1–7; 11.484–93; 761–2; XI.218–20; XIV.508–9; XVI. 112–13), and invocations of the Muse are common before narratives requiring enumeration; cf. P. Murray, op. cit. (n.7) 90–2; see the latter's distinction (89–90) between the general inspiration that the poet possesses and his need at times for specific assistance.

[9] Maehler, *Auffassung des Dichterberufs* 33ff.

the Muse, and by so doing recognises his own role in the composition of his songs.[10] Yet as in the *Iliad* so in the *Odyssey*, the narrator's authority is absolute, and the poet expresses no uncertainty when reporting actions, intentions, or motivations.[11] The human characters, on the other hand, behave differently from the narrator. Speakers in Homer (as we would expect in real life) will sometimes claim to be speaking truth by appealing in oaths to the gods as guarantors of their credibility, by offering wagers, and by other forms of bargaining.[12] Moreover, unlike the narrator, humans in the epic are not omniscient, a condition best seen in Odysseus' narrative of his own adventures where he frequently expresses ignorance of the workings of the gods, or even of some aspects of his own experience.[13]

In the *Theogony* Hesiod speaks more explicitly of his authority, but the source of his knowledge is the same: it is the Muses who visit him and give him the poet's staff and their ambiguous message that they can speak both truth and falsehood that sounds like truth.[14] In archaic lyric poetry, the invocation of the Muses remains common, although one can also see traces of new validations interspersed amongst the traditional ones: Theognis invokes the gods at the outset of his poems, yet speaks of some of the content of his poem as derived from 'the experience of my elders'; Mimnermus appeals to eyewitnesses as validators for his description of a fighter's prowess in battle; Solon calls the Earth to witness for his political actions.[15]

Similarly, and perhaps in imitation of the poets, the early philosophers invoke Muses or gods as a validation for the truth of their tales or explanations: Parmenides speaks of δαίμονες, Empedocles of the Muse who directs him.[16] But here too there is a movement away from the divine apparatus. Part of the philosophers' claim to authority is an

[10] *Od.* XXII.347–9, with P. Murray, op. cit. (n.7) 96–7.

[11] Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction* 4–6. [12] See Bowie, *L&F* 1–2.

[13] For a full treatment see de Jong, *CQ* 42 (1992) 1–11. The narrator is careful to portray the hero as knowing no more than he should; Odysseus even cites sources when relating events in heaven: ταῦτα δ' ἐγὼν ἤκουσα Καλυψοῦς ἠϋκόμοιο. | ἡ δ' ἔφη Ἑρμαίαο διακτόρου αὐτὴ ἀκοῦσαι (*Od.* XII.389–90). (The lines have been considered spurious; for a defence of their genuineness see H. Erbse, *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee* (Berlin and New York 1972) 12–15.) [14] *Theog.* 22–32, with West's commentary ad loc.

[15] Theognis 1–18; 769–72, esp. 769–70; Mimnermus F 13; Solon F 13. 1–2; F 36. 3–5. On the more pronounced use of the first-person among the poets see App. II n.3. [16] DK 28 B 1; 31 B 3, 4.

emphasis on their own knowledge and innovation, as can be seen partly in their more pronounced use of the first person,[17] and partly in the attacks on their predecessors and contemporaries.[18] It is this pattern which the early historians follow. Greek historiography opens with a striking and individual claim:

> Hecataeus of Miletus speaks thus: I write what follows as it seems to me to be true; for the stories of the Greeks are varied, and, as is manifest to me, ludicrous.[19]

The historian here seems to claim only his own intellectual gifts – 'as it seems to me to be true' – for the narrative to follow in his work. He has no recourse to oaths, he calls no one as witness, he stands unsupported by god or Muse. We do not know, of course, that this is the sole validation used by Hecataeus, nor whether at various points in his narrative he supported his presentation by other means. But the claim at the outset is nonetheless striking, and introduces a fundamentally new direction.

The ancient historian did not, like the epic or didactic poet, profess inspiration or omniscience, nor did he swear an oath to the truth of his words.[20] In place of these he used a variety of claims, promises, 'proofs', and advertisements. The earliest and most common was the assurance that the work before the reader rested on the author's personal inquiry and investigation. Although the claim was to take many forms, from actual participation in events to the more sedentary perusal of previous histories, it was nevertheless a persistent feature of ancient historiography and can be found in nearly every historian from Herodotus to Ammianus. As the historical consciousness of the Greeks grew, and as more areas of exploration seized their interest, the historians were forced to confront new challenges to their authority and new ways of asserting it. Without abandoning the original means of validation, they superimposed new types on existing models. Claims are piled upon claims, not only because of the omnipresent influence of rhetoric, but also because, as more and more assayed the task of history, it became correspondingly more difficult to distinguish oneself, in Livy's phrase, 'in such a crowd of writers'.[21] Add to this that the Romans, although

[17] See Lloyd, *MRE* 59–70; id., *Revolutions of Wisdom* 83–108; id., *PCPhS* 40 (1994) 28–9. [18] For polemic as an element in winning authority, see Ch. V §1.

[19] Hecataeus, *FGrHist* 1 F 1a.

[20] Cf. Sen. *Apocol.* 1. 2: 'quis umquam ab historico iuratores exegit?'

[21] Livy, *praef.* 3: 'in tanta scriptorum turba'.

influenced by the Greeks, had social and literary traditions of their own which affected how they claimed authority, and that many types of Roman validation co-existed with the ones inherited from the classical and Hellenistic Greek worlds. Some of these claims – rather a large number of them – have to do with the non-epistemic basis of the historian's account, and revolve around issues of character. This is not surprising given the importance in antiquity of character in rhetoric and real life: the highly stratified societies of Greece and Rome cared a great deal about the status of the speaker. The proof that things are as the historian says they are depended not a little on the audience's perception of the narrator's character: to believe an historical account, it was necessary to believe the historian himself.

Now historical narrative, as it first appears in Herodotus and continues to Ammianus (and beyond), is a largely third-person account that employs some element of creative imitation or representation (*mimesis*) to portray the actions, thoughts, intentions, and words of characters who are presumed, with more or less certainty, to have really existed and acted so.[22] This is historiography's legacy from Homer, who, as the writer of the most 'authoritative' third-person narrative, provided a model not only for later poets epic and otherwise, but also for the prose historians who, by way of Herodotus, saw him as their model and rival. Homeric epic provided historiography with many of its distinctive and long-lived features: its predominantly third-person narrative; its subject matter of great deeds and great words, of λόγοι and ἔργα; its concern to articulate a sequence of events and to discuss their causes and effects; and (not least of all) its concern with praise and rescue from oblivion.[23] Historiography differs from epic, however, in that it also contains commentary on the narrative by the historian himself: here the narrator employs an 'artificial authority' by which he interprets the events in his work for the reader, and explicitly directs the reader to

[22] For ancient categories of narrative, divided according to narrator, see Plato, *Rep.* III.392d–394d, with de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers* 3ff.; Arist. *Poet.* 3, 1448a 19–25, with Lucas' commentary ad loc.; Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* 128 with n. 34; Else, *Aristotle's Poetics* 97ff. For narratives divided by subject see below, p. 118.

[23] Strasburger, *Studien zur alten Geschichte* II.1057–97 remains the fundamental treatment; see also Fornara, *Nature* 62–3, 76–7; Woodman, *RICH* ch. I, *passim*; for the influence of Homer on Herodotus see Hüber, in *Synusia: Festgabe . . . Schadewaldt* 29–52; Huxley, *Herodotus and the Epic* 5–7, 21–2; Erbse, *Studien zum Verständnis Herodots* 122–32.

think in a certain manner.[24] Whereas the Homeric narrator is largely unintrusive, Herodotus, frequently, in his own person, calls attention to his role as the organiser and expositor of his history, reminding his audience of the travels, investigative work, and comparison of accounts that went into the making of his history, while oftentimes commenting explicitly on the quality of the material he includes.[25]

Whether this owes something to Hecataeus cannot be determined: like Dionysius, we can say very little about the styles of the earliest historians.[26] To what extent their narrative methods originated in traditional story-telling methods[27] or earlier non-historical prose works is impossible to say. We do know, however, that Herodotus' activity coincides with other investigative and 'historical' works, that Ionian rationalism in general and the works of Hecataeus (and, less certainly, Xanthus of Lydia[28]) in particular provided the spur to and (at least at the beginning) the intellectual framework of his investigations. Had we more prose literature of Herodotus' time we would have a clearer sense of the tradition and his place in it, of the conventions of prose narrative and the accepted ways of telling and validating stories. Yet all we have is Herodotus, emerging with a massive work at the beginning of a tradition:[29]

[24] On intrusive narration see Booth, op. cit. (n.11) 40–2, 67–86. Historians could also intrude into their narratives in less explicit ways, for example, oblique characterisation, ascription of motives, language of judgement, and so on; for an analysis of some of these techniques in Thucydides see Hornblower, *Greek Historiography* 131–66.

[25] On the Herodotean narrator see Beltrametti, *Erodoto*; Darbo-Peschanski, *Le discours du particulier*; Dewald, *Arethusa* 20 (1987) 147–70, who records 1,087 explicit or implicit intrusions.

[26] D. Hal. *Thuc.* 23, though he is here speaking of historians before Hecataeus, a category not recognised by moderns: for Hecataeus as the first historian, see Jacoby, *Abhandlungen* 20–1. For Dionysius' stylistic evaluations of early historians see Toye, *AJPh* 116 (1995) 298–9 with reff.

[27] O. Murray, in *Achaemenid History* II.93–115.

[28] On Xanthus' influence on Herodotus, *FGrHist* 765 T 5; discussion in Pearson, *Early Ionian Historians* 109–16; at 134, he places Xanthus between Hecataeus and Herodotus, an advance over the former and (accepting Ephorus) a spur to the latter. Von Fritz, *Griech. Geschichtsschreibung* I.88, II.72 n. 49 says 'etwa mit Herodot gleichzeitig', but notes that influence on Herodotus from Xanthus' fragments is not demonstrable. Jacoby in the *Fragmente* dates Xanthus 'nach 425'.

[29] Or could it possibly be the end of a tradition (like the *Iliad*) with a long history behind it, of which only faint traces remain? That, at least, is how it seemed to Dionysius (*Thuc.* 5).

> Herodotus of Halicarnassus here displays his inquiry, in order that human action may not become obliterated in time, and in order that great and marvellous deeds, some displayed by Greeks, some by barbarians, may not lack their renown; and most especially why they made war on each other.

The work is a display of inquiry (ἱστορίης ἀπόδεξις) in the sense that it both publishes the results of the author's inquiries, and shows the narrator himself in the act of discovery.[30] Herodotus is the first to have written a mainly third-person narrative that wished to commemorate deeds and bestow fame upon them, yet at the same time he was working in a new tradition – no longer the poetic with its guarantees of validity from the Muse.[31] His solution was a constant stream of comment that represents a pervasive concern with obviating any doubts that might arise: Herodotus seems to assume that the question, 'How do you know?', is constantly on his audience's mind.[32] His solution was to place himself, if not front and centre, then in a constant and direct relationship with his material, ensuring that he, the narrator, was recognised as the medium, the authority, through which the deeds became known and celebrated. Such self-display does, however, find parallels in the contemporary milieu of performance known from other genres, particularly by the sophists and the medical writers. Here authors performed before citizens in wisdom contests, and it is possible to see something of Herodotus' persona in their pronounced use of the first-person pronoun, in their claims of truth telling, and in their polemic with predecessors and contemporaries.[33]

A different method, and the one that was to become standard, is revealed by Thucydides. This narrator, although like Herodotus' a controlling intelligence, intrudes only briefly upon the narrative, and even these intrusions are nearly exclusively in digressions. Unlike Herodotus, who gives his methodological procedures piece-

[30] Dewald, op. cit. (n.25).

[31] Hüber, op. cit. (n.23) 52 n. 74 points out that still in Herodotus' time epic poems about the Persian Wars could begin with an appeal to the Muses. For earlier examples from historical epic see Mimnermus F 13 (probably from his *History of Smyrna*) and Simonides F 11.21 (from his *Battle of Plataea*).

[32] For the importance of avoiding this question in narrative see Dowden, *CQ* 32 (1982) 420.

[33] See Lloyd in the works cited above, n. 17; for Herodotus' similarity in method and narrative manner to the medical writers see Lateiner, *Antichthon* 20 (1986) 1–20; Thomas, in *Vermittlung und Tradierung von Wissen* 234–43.

meal and throughout the history, Thucydides reveals the type of mind to be expected in his work all at the beginning: his extended preface plays a crucial role in the establishment of the historian's authority.[34] In a move away from Herodotus, Thucydides de-emphasises the first person, even in non-contemporary history, using an impersonal or third-person language of investigation and conjecture.[35] What few first-person remarks exist are reinforced by the constant stream of reasoning, with its whole host of words emphasising mental activity; and the analytical mind behind them is producing simultaneously a 'history' of early Greece and a justification of the claim at the outset that the Peloponnesian War was greater than any that had gone before. The narrator is just as present in Thucydides; but he is not as intrusive as in Herodotus. All seems assured (within human limits, of course), and the entire dynamic is presented as impersonal and irrefragable. Plato was fond of stating that he and his interlocutors must follow an argument to whatever place the *logos* led,[36] and in the opening chapters of Thucydides, the reasoning is so effectively made that he seems almost to be that Platonic servant of *logos*.[37] No doubt part of the purpose of such assuredness is that the author wishes to avoid questions about the source of his knowledge – whether autopsy, inquiry, hearsay, or even written sources – which seems to have been constantly on Herodotus' mind. The narrative homogeneity of Thucydides is meant to inspire confidence; he does not, like Herodotus, want the emphasis to be on his tracking down of sources, but on the finished product: the reader is to be concerned not with the process of research, but rather with the result.

To the extent that Thucydides omitted the constant authorial comment in Herodotus, and in his contemporary narrative attempted to win authority by producing an account that shows little or no uncertainty, to this extent we may say that he fashioned an alternative persona to that of

[34] See Connor, in *The Greek Historians* 1–17 for intelligence as a factor in the author's credibility; *contra*, Robinson, ibid. 19–23; Moles, *L&F* 98–106 shows that in many ways Thucydides modelled his preface on Herodotus'.

[35] See Connor, *Thucydides* 27–32.

[36] See R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford ^{2}1953) 7–15.

[37] Parry, *Language of Achilles and other Papers* 287 argues that this is one of Thucydides' most subjective aspects; Woodman, *RICH* 23 speaks of 'an essentially rhetorical procedure'.

Herodotus.[38] The constant first-person comment was not to be repeated,[39] nor was the frequent injection of the narrator himself revived, except for conscious (but limited) imitation of Herodotus in non-contemporary history.[40] In Xenophon we see an extreme application of the Thucydidean model. The narrator in Xenophon (both *Hellenica* and *Anabasis*) is not only unintrusive: he is practically anonymous.[41] His works recognise the value of a mostly impersonal narrative told in a style largely free of rhetorical adornment, in achieving credibility.[42] It is no coincidence that for the ancients and (until recently) moderns, his work was considered very reliable.[43]

Another method of narration, that of Polybius, is not unrelated to the question of authority, and should here be mentioned. The Polybian narrator combines a largely unobtrusive narrative of the deeds with a highly intrusive explicator of that narrative. Many major (and not a few minor) episodes are explained, analysed, commended,

[38] Thucydides' authority is helped by the fact that he is our sole source for most of what he reports and we cannot compare his account with another: see Dover, *HCT* v.403–5; id., *Thucydides* 4–5.

[39] For the long but different first-person accounts of Dio and Ammianus, see below, pp. 199ff.

[40] As, for example, by Dionysius: see Ek, *Herodotismen*; id., *Eranos* 43 (1945) 198–214.

[41] On Xenophon's anonymity in the *Anabasis* see Ch. IV n. 135; in the *Hellenica*, note the extreme effacement of the author in the incident where the Spartan government has reprimanded the troops under Dercylidas for their previous behaviour but commended them for their present actions; they are defended, says the narrator, by 'the one who was in charge of the partisans of Cyrus' (ὁ τῶν Κυρείων προεστηκώς, *Hell.* III.2.7), i. e. Xenophon – whose name is strikingly omitted.

[42] As style is not an explicit means of claiming authority, I do not treat it in this book (but see below, pp. 116ff.). For some indications that an unadorned style could be a mark of authoritativeness, see Sall. *Jug.* 85. 31; Livy, III.56.3; for a soldier's 'plain' (and therefore trustworthy) style, see Cic. *Brut.* 262 (on Caesar's *Commentarii*); Livy, X.24.4; Luc. *h. c.* 8; 16.

[43] Only the recovery of a contemporary account of the same events (the Oxyrhynchus historian) has shown the obvious shortcomings of Xenophon's *Hellenica*. The unintrusiveness of the narrator had seemed to guarantee a type of veracity: see Cawkwell, introduction to the Penguin *Hellenica* 16. Imitating only the outward feature of Thucydides' narrative, Xenophon nevertheless compelled belief. There is a difference in the narrator's voice from the first part of the history to the second: see *Hell.* II.3.56; IV.3.16; 8.1; VI.2.32; 2.39; VII.2.1. Yet even with such examples acknowledged, Xenophon's narrator remains basically that of Thucydides, unintrusive except for occasional passages where the narrator's voice becomes emphatic.

or reproved by the historian in his own person, in digressions placed without fail throughout the entire work. Morals are frequently drawn and interpretations consistently re-emphasised.[44] Thus a Thucydidean component, more or less faithfully followed, has had grafted upon it a method much closer to the demonstrative method of Herodotus. But Polybius goes beyond even Herodotus in interpreting his own narrative: where Herodotus could be dramatic and subtle, Polybius allows nearly nothing to pass without drawing his own moral from it for the benefit of his audience, almost as if he were afraid that they might overlook an incident's importance, or draw the wrong lesson or moral from what he has so carefully constructed.[45] If this were not enough, he also at times even explains his explanations.[46] Whether this was the method of the Hellenistic historians (who may have begun a more explicit tradition of explaining the use or benefit of their histories[47]) cannot be known.

How the early Roman historians claimed authority we can only suggest, since their narrative manner can hardly be recovered from the meagre fragments. When we can finally examine the tradition, with Sallust's *Catiline*, Greek influences on Roman literature had been present for more than a century. Narrative styles among the Romans differ, yet it is only rarely (comparatively speaking) that Sallust, Tacitus, and Ammianus comment explicitly in their own person on events, characters, digressions, or problems with the tradition. Indeed, as we shall see, the Roman historians use far fewer explicit methods to create an authoritative persona than do the Greeks. Livy, however, is a significant exception, since he presents himself in a Herodotean manner, sifting through the tradition, comparing accounts and sources, marvelling, or addressing the reader.[48] His use of the first person is more pronounced than in

[44] On the Polybian persona see Ibendorff, *Unters. z. darstellerischen Persönlichkeit des Polybios*, who speaks of 'sein schulmeisterliches Temperament' (24); cf. Davidson, *JRS* 81 (1991) 15, that Polybius provides us 'with a paradigmatic gaze and exemplary responses'.

[45] The method has been called 'apodeictic': see Pédech, *Méthode* 43–53; Petzold, *Studien* 3–20; Sacks, *Polybius* 171–8. In the nineteenth century it was common for historians to combine a narrative and a dissertative mode, in the latter of which they gave their views and opinions on the matters they had narrated, much as in Polybius: see White, *Content of the Form* 27–8 with nn.

[46] See, e. g., VII.11.1.

[47] Polybius says (1.1.1) that nearly all historians before him had spoken of history's utility and benefit.

[48] See below, pp. 248f.

any of the other Roman historians.[49] On the whole, however, the Romans, like the Greeks, maintain a narrative with few interruptions; when expressing comment, however, they do so, unlike the Greeks, in an indirect and oblique manner.[50]

3. TRADITION

When Thucydides said that his history would have value because it showed the sort of things that had happened and would, given human nature, happen again in the same or similar ways, he was probably not expecting that a later writer would take him literally. Crepereius Calpurnianus, an historian of the second century AD writing on Rome's wars with Parthia, took whole incidents and speeches from Thucydides; he even included a plague falling on the Romans, describing it in the same way as the one that attacked Athens.[51] Crepereius' error, however, was not in trying to imitate Thucydides, but rather in the approach he took to his imitation; for he appropriated rather than imitated.

Between Herodotus and Ammianus lie a millennium and a myriad of Greek and Roman writers who sought to preserve, exalt, defend, or decry some area of the historical past in a predominantly third-person narrative prose account. It might seem foolish even to suggest that we may speak of a 'tradition' that could embrace so many writers over so vast a time. Yet the literary tradition of classical antiquity – including the writing of history – was conservative and, for many centuries, consciously classicising, with appeal made to a few unchanging models of acknowledged mastery. It had as its central technique the employment of *mimesis*, the creative imitation of one's predecessors.[52] The idea that one should imitate one's great predecessors, and look to them for the proper way to treat almost any task is a fundamental aspect of

[49] Although one finds in him a paradoxical alternation between assurance and diffidence: Kraus, *Livy: Ab Urbe Condita Book VI*, 13–15. It is possible that Livy, not possessing the *auctoritas* that came with political experience, needed to justify his narrative far more than his predecessors did: see below, pp. 140ff.

[50] See below, pp. 93ff. and 246ff.

[51] Thuc. 1.22.4; Luc. *h.c.* 15; for the references to Thucydides see Homeyer, *Lukian* ad loc.

[52] For the dual sense of *mimesis* as both the representation of reality by narrative and the imitation of previous models, see McKeon, in *Critics and Criticism* 147–75.

ancient literary creation and criticism.[53] Already established by the fourth century BC,[54] imitation of one's predecessors never ceased to exert an influence on ancient writers of both poetry and prose. Quintilian speaks for the entire tradition when he says that 'a great part of art lies in imitation'.[55]

Historiography, as a branch of rhetoric in the ancient world, was subject to the same types of literary analysis as poetry or oratory. The historian's terrain might be different and he might have a different relationship to his subject matter, but it was expected that he would give care and attention to the arrangement, language, and presentation of his material; that his finished product would be 'artistic' and appealing; and that he would write with a real sense of what his predecessors had done, especially those who had done well and were worthy of imitation.[56] 'Longinus' in *On the Sublime* provides the clearest prescriptive: when composing with an eye towards sublimity, he says, one should imagine how the masters – Homer, Plato, Demosthenes, or Thucydides – would have said the same thing, and one should even imagine that those great models were present and would be the critics of what one had written.[57] Good imitation was not, however, a literal copying,[58] but rather an understanding both of the general spirit of the original and of

[53] On imitation see Kroll, *Studien* 139–84; id., *RE* Suppl. VII, 1113–17; McKeon, op. cit. (n.52); Bompaire, *Lucien écrivain* 13–154; Russell, in *Creative Imitation* 1–16; Fantham, *CPh* 73 (1978) 1–16, 102–16.

[54] Kroll, *RE* Suppl. VII, 1113.

[55] Quint. x.2.1: 'neque enim dubitari potest quin artis pars magna contineatur imitatione'.

[56] Cf. Cameron, in *History as Text* 8: '[W]e had better stop condemning as mere plagiarism or "empty rhetoric" the deep-seated ancient tendencies to embody in their work reminiscences of earlier authors and to follow literary precedents set years, or even centuries before.'

[57] [Long.] *Subl.* 13. 2–14. 1. The ancient critics, however, were not so naïve as to think that imitation was all that was necessary, or that everyone had the same possibilities of success. Dionysius, for one, separated imitation into two types, that which was natural to some, and that which could be learned through precepts, the second of which was always inferior to the first and could always be detected by the expert eye (*Dinarch.* 7=II.268–70 Usher). Quintilian too makes clear that one's success or failure depended as much on native talent as on any propensity or capacity for imitation (x.2.12 et al.).

[58] The critics are, in fact, quite clear on what constitutes bad imitation (κακοζηλία): Lucian cites as examples both Crepereius and an unnamed historian who modelled his phrases on Herodotus, taking over slavishly his dialect and phraseology (*h.c.* 15: 18). On the importance of a model, see *h.c.* 34–54 *passim*; for excessive imitation or imitation of others' faults see below, n. 76 and Fantham, op. cit. (n.53) 106–7.

those things that were admirable in previous writers, whether they be choice of language, arrangement, attitude, or even the subject matter itself. The imitator does not seek a one-to-one correspondence with a single previous model, nor is his imitation to be slavish (this is mere copying) but rather creative:[59] the writer must appropriate the spirit of his model or models and breathe new life into them, to show how something could be better done, or, if not better done, then well done in a different way.[60]

Thus the goal of ancient composition was not to strike out boldly in a radical departure from one's predecessors, but rather to be incrementally innovative within a tradition, by embracing the best in previous performers and adding something of one's own marked with an individual stamp.[61] For the historian, the genre was both an 'enabling condition' and a 'restraint upon his inventiveness'.[62] Those historians whom antiquity considered great (and they are, for the most part, those whom we consider great[63]) were all seen to have accomplished, by imitation of their predecessors, that delicate balancing act whereby they could at once remind the listener of their great predecessors and display to that same audience something yet different from those time-honoured models. For the writer was to see himself not just as an imitator, but also as a competitor.[64] Critics often explain a writer's achievement by his conscious efforts to rival his predecessors: both Herodotus and Thucydides are characterised as imitators *and* rivals of Homer, as later historians were seen as imitators and rivals of the two great fifth-century historians. Dionysius says that Herodotus was 'not deterred' by writers

[59] Cf. [Dionysius] *Art. Rhet.* 19 (U-R II.373): 'he imitates Demosthenes who speaks not the words of Demosthenes but in the spirit of Demosthenes' (μιμεῖται τὸν Δημοσθένην οὐχ ὁ τὸ ‹Δημοσθένους λέγων ἀλλ' ὁ› Δημοσθενικῶς). [60] Russell, op. cit. (n.53) 5–16; Quint. x.2.27–8.

[61] See Russell, op. cit. (n.53) 5; cf. Peter, *Wahrheit* 417: 'Im allgemeinen hat selbst die öffentlich gesprochene Rede sich an die von der Kunst aufgestellten Regeln gehalten und von den Griechen ist dies nicht als eine Beschränkung der Freiheit empfunden worden.' Even the use of accepted *topoi* did not prevent innovation: cf. Cairns, *Generic Composition*, ch. 4; and next note.

[62] E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York 1985) 83 (of the novel); cf. DuQuesnay, *PLLS* 3 (1981) 56 (of Virgil in the *Eclogues*): 'exploiting, manipulating and defeating the expectations of his readers which they shared with him as a result of their common cultural, literary and educational background'. It is precisely their relationship to conventions that allows writers to do something new, when they wish. [63] Momigliano, *Quinto Contributo* 13–31.

[64] See Lefkowitz, *First-Person Fictions* 161–8; Wiseman, *CC* 27–9.